

Monday, December 8, 2008

**ANTIBIOTICS NOT A CURE ALL**  
**Coalition Recommends Patience For Colds & Runny Noses**

What do sinusitis, most sore throats, bronchitis, runny noses and the regular cold have in common? They are upper respiratory tract infections usually caused by viruses that can't be cured with antibiotics. Yet, each year, health care providers in the U.S. prescribe tens of millions of antibiotics for viral infections.

To bring attention to this increasing problem, the Indiana Adult Immunization Coalition and its partners are educating the public about antibiotic resistance and the importance of appropriate antibiotic use.

“Antibiotic overuse is a serious problem and a threat to everyone’s health,” says Dr. Roland Grieb, Chair of the IAIC. Over-prescribing antibiotics, using a broad-spectrum therapy when a more specific drug would be better, starting and stopping medications, giving leftover medications to a friend who appears to have the same ailment you had, all contribute to the problem of antibiotic drug resistance.

“As we enter this year’s cold and flu season, we ask parents to not insist on getting antibiotics when a health care provider says they are not needed,” says Grieb. “If you have a cold, or the flu, antibiotics won't work for you.”

According to Grieb antibiotics kill bacteria, not the viruses that cause colds or flu, most coughs and bronchitis, sore throats not caused by strep, and runny noses. Taking antibiotics when you don't need them or not as prescribed increases your risk of getting an infection later that resists antibiotic treatment. If the health care provider's recommendation is to wait - wait. People need to be patient and let the body do its work.

Grieb also asks health care providers to take the time to educate their patients about antibiotic resistance and the possibility of having serious side effects. According to a recent study published in the [\*Clinical Infectious Diseases Journal\*](#), inappropriate use of antibiotics to treat upper respiratory infections (URIs) can result in unnecessary risk for adverse events and contribute to the likelihood of antibiotic resistance. Adverse events related to antibiotics (usually allergies or drug intolerance) resulted in an estimated 142,500 emergency department visits annually in the United States during 2004-2006. In addition, inappropriate and excessive antimicrobial use can increase a community's risk for antibiotic-resistant bacterial infections that might lead to severe or prolonged illness, hospitalization, and sometimes death. Educating clinicians and the public regarding appropriate use of antibiotics might help reduce adverse drug events, including antibiotic resistance.

To help prevent illness, Grieb encourages people to wash their hands frequently, get the flu vaccine and avoid close contact with people who are sick.

The Indiana Adult Immunization Coalition is a voluntary group of health and older adult focused organizations dedicated to eradicating vaccine preventable deaths and disease among adults. The Coalition promotes education and outreach activities to increase awareness of and participation in adult immunizations.

For more information about antibiotic resistance, visit [www.cdc.gov/getsmart](http://www.cdc.gov/getsmart).

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